

A NEW *FREZIERA* (THEACEAE) FROM THE  
PANAMA/COLOMBIA BORDER

*Freziera forerorum* A. Gentry, sp. nov.—FIG. 1.

Species foliorum basibus plus magis inaequilateris a congeneribus diversa.

Slender tree 8 m tall. Branchlets strongly angled, with a line of trichomes below each node when young, soon glabrescent. Leaves sessile, oblanceolate, coriaceous, 8–18 cm long, 1.8–5.2 cm wide, acuminate at the apex, strikingly asymmetric at the base, the lamina on one side attenuate and ending 5–10 mm from the leaf base, lamina on other side cordate-auriculate, glabrous above, sparsely appressed puberulous below, the margin serrulate, the veins plane above, prominulous below. Flowers 1–3-fasciculate, axillary or borne below the leaves, the pedicels 3–4 mm long, glabrous, the 2 bracteoles glabrous except for sparsely ciliate margins; calyx lobes imbricate, suborbicular, glabrous, ca. 4 mm long; petals and stamens not seen; ovary glabrous, orbicular, attenuated into a style. Immature fruit small, subglobose, 3–4 mm in diameter, many seeded, the tiny seeds kidney-shaped, papillate.

TYPE: PANAMA. DARIÉN: Summit of Pico Tacarcuna, highest point of the Serrania del Darién, ca. 1900 m, 22 July 1976, A. Gentry, H. León & L. Forero 16905 (MO, holotype; COL, PMA, and to be distributed, isotypes).

This plant keys to *F. angulosa* Tulasne in Kobuski's (1941) key, and is no doubt most closely related to that Bolivian species. It differs especially in the much narrower, strikingly more asymmetrical leaves with an accentuated basal lobe on one side. The pedicels are longer than in *F. angulosa*, while both bracteoles and pedicels are puberulous in that species.

This is a truly remarkable plant which may have the most asymmetric leaf base of any angiosperm. It comes from an equally remarkable place—the isolated summit of Pico Tacarcuna, almost exactly on the border between Colombia and Panama. The highest mountain between the Andes and western Panama, Cerro Tacarcuna has a unique relict vegetation. Almost one-fourth of the plant species collected in the oak forest above 1,400–1,500 m are undescribed. (See Gentry, 1977, for a description of the area.) *Freziera forerorum* is one of only five tree species which grow on the extreme summit of Cerro Tacarcuna. Interestingly, its congener *Freziera hieronymi* Kobuski (also new to Panama and to North America) is one of those four sympatric species. Unlike *F. hieronymi* and the other three species, *F. forerorum* appears to be limited to the summit of Pico Tacarcuna, a narrow ridge less than 50 m long. The vegetation of the flat summit ridge is an open montane thicket very different from the elfin forest of other exposed parts of the Tacarcuna massif and elsewhere in eastern Panama. *Freziera forerorum* appears to be restricted to this peculiar open montane thicket where extreme exposure to wind may be related to its stiff leaves with twig-clasping basal auricles. In view of its population of only a few individuals and the fact that all the trees (of all species) along the western edge of the summit ridge appear to be dying, this is no doubt an acutely threatened



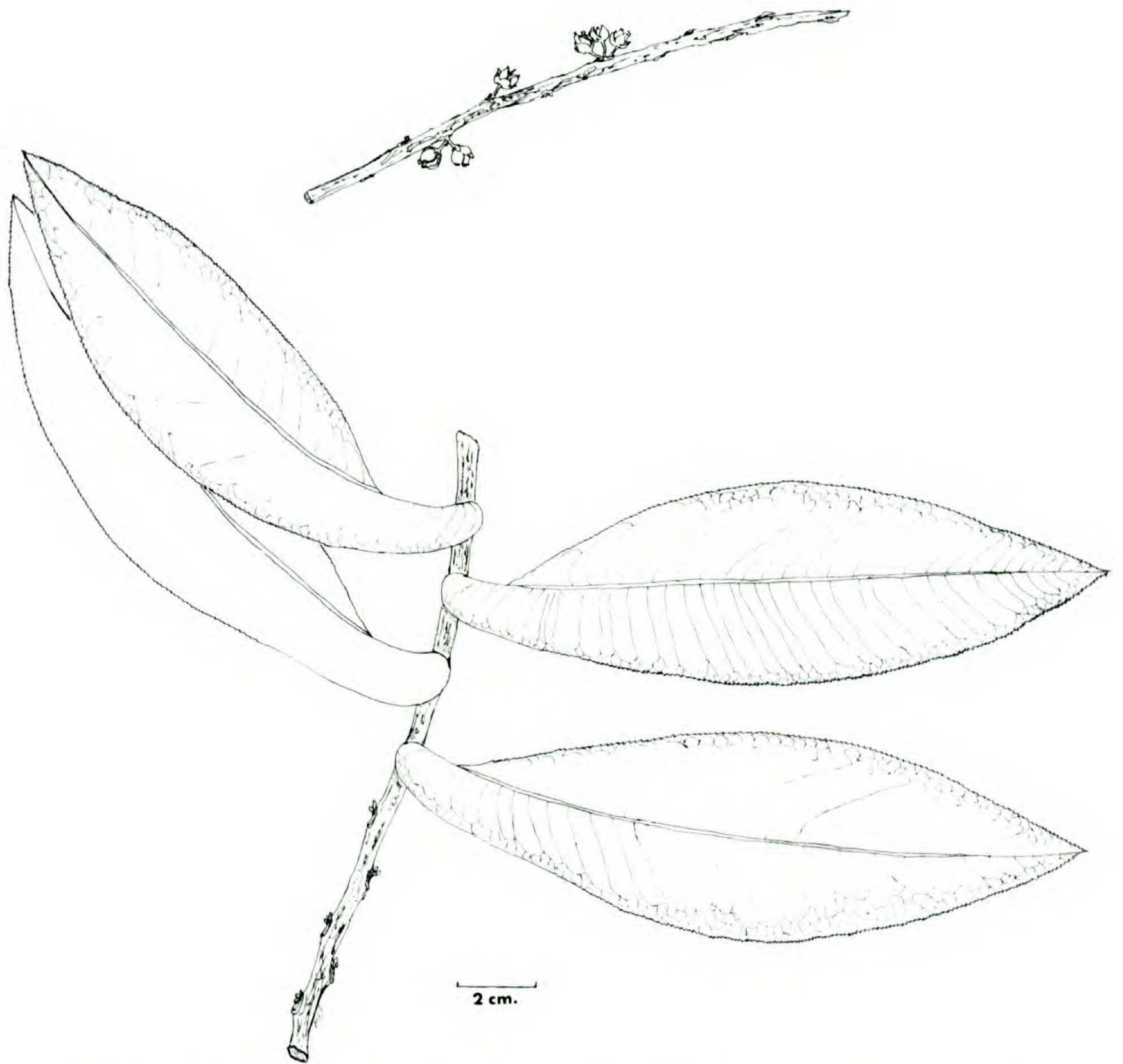


FIGURE 1. *Freziera forerorum* A. Gentry, *Gentry et al.* 16905 (MO). Top: Fertile twig with old flowers and immature fruits. Bottom: Leafy twig.

species, one of the very few endangered species to whose demise man has not contributed.

I take pleasure in dedicating this species to two Colombian colleagues—Dr. Enrique Forero with whom I am conducting the floristic survey of the Chocó which led to its discovery and his student, Luis Forero, in whose company I found it.

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#### LITERATURE CITED

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—Alwyn H. Gentry, *Missouri Botanical Garden, 2345 Tower Grove Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63110.*